

CLAIMS

We claim:

1        1. A method for providing multi-tiered broadcasting services to subscribers,  
2 comprising the steps of:  
3              broadcasting primary content over one or more primary content channels;  
4              broadcasting secondary content over one or more secondary-content channels;  
5              enabling reception of a first tier broadcasting service whereby subscribers subscribing  
6 to said first tier receive only said primary content; and  
7              enabling reception of a second tier broadcasting service whereby subscribers  
8 subscribing to said second tier receive both said primary content and said secondary content.

1        2. The method of claim 1, wherein said primary content comprises substantive  
2 programming content and said secondary content comprises promotional content.

1        3. The method of claim 2, wherein said promotional content comprises commercial  
2 advertising.

1        4. The method of claim 1, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2 associated with at least one secondary-content channel.

1        5. The method of claim 4, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2 associated with a different secondary content channel.

1       6. The method of claim 4, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2       associated with the same secondary content channel.

1       7. The method of claim 6, wherein said same secondary-content channel is part of a  
2       service channel serving all of said primary content channels.

1       8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
2           requiring that second tier subscribers play at least a portion of said secondary content  
3       before being able to play said primary content.

1       9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:  
2           tracking how much of said secondary content has been played by said second-tier  
3       subscriber; and  
4           discontinuing the requirement that said second-tier subscribers play back said  
5       secondary content upon the occurrence of a first predetermined triggering event.

1       10. The method of claim 9, wherein said first predetermined triggering event  
2       comprises the reaching of a threshold-level of playing of said secondary content.

1       11. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of:  
2           reinstating the requirement that said second-tier subscribers play back said secondary  
3       content upon the occurrence of a second predetermined triggering event.

1       12. The method of claim 11, wherein said second predetermined triggering event  
2       comprises the reaching of a threshold-level of playing of said primary content.

1           13. The method of claim 11, wherein said second predetermined triggering event  
2   comprises the changing from one primary content channel to another primary content channel  
3   by a second-tier subscriber.

1           14. A system for providing multi-tiered broadcasting services to subscribers,  
2   comprising:  
3         means for broadcasting primary content over one or more primary content channels;  
4         means for broadcasting secondary content over one or more secondary-content  
5   channels;  
6         means for enabling reception of a first tier broadcasting service whereby subscribers  
7   subscribing to said first tier receive only said primary content; and  
8         means for enabling reception of a second tier broadcasting service whereby  
9   subscribers subscribing to said second tier receive both said primary content and said  
10   secondary content.

1           15. The system of claim 14, wherein said primary content comprises substantive  
2   programming content and said secondary content comprises promotional content.

1           16. The system of claim 15, wherein said promotional content comprises commercial  
2   advertising.

1           17. The system of claim 14, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2   associated with at least one secondary-content channel.

1        18. The system of claim 17, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2        associated with a different secondary content channel.

1        19. The system of claim 17, wherein each of said primary content channels is  
2        associated with the same secondary content channel.

1        20. The system of claim 19, wherein said same secondary-content channel is part of a  
2        service channel serving all of said primary content channels.

1        21. The system of claim 14, further comprising:  
2            means for requiring that second tier subscribers play at least a portion of said  
3        secondary content before being able to play said primary content.

1        22. The system of claim 21, further comprising:  
2            means for tracking how much of said secondary content has been played by said  
3        second-tier subscriber; and  
4            means for discontinuing the requirement that said second-tier subscribers play back  
5        said secondary content upon the occurrence of a first predetermined triggering event.

1        23. The system of claim 22, wherein said first predetermined triggering event  
2        comprises the reaching of a threshold-level of playing of said secondary content.

1        24. The system of claim 22, further comprising:  
2            means for reinstating the requirement that said second-tier subscribers play back said  
3        secondary content upon the occurrence of a second predetermined triggering event.

1           25. The system of claim 24, wherein said second predetermined triggering event  
2   comprises the reaching of a threshold-level of playing of said primary content.

1           26. The system of claim 24, wherein said second predetermined triggering event  
2   comprises the changing from one primary content channel to another primary content channel  
3   by a second-tier subscriber.

1           27. A computer program product for providing multi-tiered broadcasting services to  
2   subscribers, comprising a computer-readable storage medium having computer-readable  
3   program code embodied in the medium, the computer-readable program code comprising:  
4           computer-readable program code that controls the broadcasting of primary content  
5   over one or more primary content channels;  
6           computer-readable program code that controls the broadcasting of secondary content  
7   over one or more secondary-content channels;  
8           computer-readable program code that enables reception of a first tier broadcasting  
9   service whereby subscribers subscribing to said first tier receive only said primary content;  
10   and  
11           computer-readable program code that enables reception of a second tier broadcasting  
12   service whereby subscribers subscribing to said second tier receive both said primary content  
13   and said secondary content.

1           28. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein said primary content  
2   comprises substantive programming content and said secondary content comprises  
3   promotional content.

1           29. The computer program product of claim 28, wherein said promotional content  
2   comprises commercial advertising.

1           30. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein each of said primary content  
2   channels is associated with at least one secondary-content channel.

1           31. The computer program product of claim 30, wherein each of said primary content  
2   channels is associated with a different secondary content channel.

1           32. The computer program product of claim 30, wherein each of said primary content  
2   channels is associated with the same secondary content channel.

1           33. The computer program product of claim 32, wherein said same secondary-content  
2   channel is part of a service channel serving all of said primary content channels.